

# **FINAL**

## **SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WETLANDS RECOVERY PROJECT BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETING MINUTES**

**NOVEMBER 29, 2001  
DANA POINT, CALIFORNIA**

### **1. Meeting attendees:**

Chair: Mary Nichols, California Resources Agency

- John Dixon (representing Peter Douglas), California Coastal Commission
- Virginia Fay, National Marine Fisheries Service
- Helen Flach, Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Jack Minan, San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Charles Raysbrook (representing Robert Hight), California Department of Fish and Game
- Sam Schuchat, California Coastal Conservancy
- Pam Slater, County of San Diego, Public Advisory Committee
- Deb Smith (representing Susan Cloke), Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Wanda Smith, Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Alexis Strauss, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- Paul Thayer, State Lands Commission
- Ruth Villalobos, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Steve Weisberg, Southern California Coastal Water Research Project, Chair of Science Advisory Panel

### **2. Work Plan Update**

Melanie Denninger (Coastal Conservancy) provided the Governing Board with an update on the Conservancy's progress in pursuing the 49 projects on the 2001-2002 Work Plan. 14 of the projects have been approved by the Coastal Conservancy Board, and the Conservancy expects to have a total of 33 projects approved by next June. One of the projects that has been approved is the Small Grants Program, which in reality is 10 projects. The Goat Canyon Enhancement Project the largest project the Conservancy anticipates approving this year. The WRP could contribute as much as \$6 million to the project.

As reported at the May Board meeting, the Conservancy began the 2001-2002 fiscal year with approximately \$9.5 million for the Wetlands Recovery Project. Two other funding sources will be available in the coming months. It appears that the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) will get a \$1 million appropriation specifically targeted for the WRP. This would be the first federal appropriation for the WRP. In addition, a settlement agreement between

Southern California Edison, Earth Island Institute, and California EarthCorps will provide approximately \$8 million in private funding to WRP projects over the next three years.

### 3. Science Advisory Panel Update

Steve Weisberg provided an update to the Governing Board on the Science Advisory Panel's (SAP) progress in helping the WRP to: 1) define and refine its goals; 2) effectively implement those goals; and 3) assess its progress. The SAP commented on a draft of the WRP Regional Strategy, and those comments have been incorporated into the revised draft. The Regional Strategy outlines very broad goals, and the SAP is working to develop these goals into more detailed objectives. The SAP has also embarked on a project with the NOAA Coastal Services Center to develop a GIS-based decision support tool (referred to as SWAMP) for the WRP. The SAP has submitted a grant proposal to the EPA to get additional funding for development of the SWAMP model.

At its October meeting, the SAP began work on developing a regional monitoring program for the WRP, as well as providing guidance on project level monitoring. As a first step, the SAP is pursuing a partnership with the EPA's Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Program (EMAP) on monitoring activities in California planned by EMAP for Summer 2002. If approved, this partnership will result in a few hundred thousand dollars for regional monitoring in Southern California, and will provide both data and valuable insight into developing a long-term monitoring program.

### 4. Public Advisory Committee

Joan Hartmann, WRP Outreach Director, provided the Board with an update on the activities of the Public Advisory Committee and County Task Forces. The County Task Forces have continued to take on more responsibility over the past year, and their efforts and energy are a key reason the WRP continues to grow. In Santa Barbara, the County recently completed its HGM guidebook for assessing streams in the south County. The Task Force helped the County get a grant from the EPA for this project. On another front, the Los Angeles County Task Force recently formed an education subcommittee. The PAC is also forming two new subcommittees – one on education, and one on demographic diversity which will be chaired by Tom Soto.

One of the main responsibilities of the PAC is to help secure public and private funds for the WRP. A critical focus in the coming months will be to get Proposition 40 passed during the March election. Supervisor Pam Slater discussed the PAC's activities over the past year in pursuit of federal monies for the WRP. The PAC joined forces with the California Coastal Coalition to help form a Southern California Coastal Caucus among the state's federal legislators. As part of this caucus, legislators are being encouraged to look beyond the bounds of their own jurisdictions and to view coastal wetlands and watersheds as part of a regional system. Federal funding priorities for the PAC include securing matching funds for the Los Cerritos project, as well as getting a WRP continuing authority approved for the ACOE. Identifying state and federal funding to address the threat posed by the invasion of *Caulerpa taxifolia* to Southern California wetlands is also a concern the PAC will address.

## 5. Regional Strategy

Paul Michel (Environmental Protection Agency, Chair of the Wetlands Managers Group) reviewed the WRP Regional Strategy and Five Year Implementation Plan with the Governing Board. Last year's Symposium kicked off the process of drafting the Regional Strategy and Implementation Plan, and completing these documents has been a key focus of the WRP over the past year. Mr. Michel reviewed the contents of the plan, including the six regional goals, and briefly explained how the County Objectives were drafted in an iterative process between the Task Forces and the Wetlands Managers Group. He then provided a synopsis of the Implementation Plan, which identifies specific actions and lead partner(s) for each of the six regional goals.

Following Mr. Michel's presentation the Board discussed the Regional Strategy. Highlights of this discussion are summarized below.

Jack Minan noted that several of his comments on the draft Regional Strategy had been incorporated into the final version. In the Chapter II, he noted that most of the data which quantifies the loss of Southern California wetlands is from the 1980s, and questioned whether more recent data is available. Mr. Minan recommended adding Pampas Grass to the list of invasive plant species discussed in Chapter II. He also recommended discussing two issues in greater detail: 1) the importance of source reduction for improving water quality; and 2) the impact of overloading wetlands' water quality polishing abilities by running too much water through too small an area. Finally, he provided some editorial corrections on the figures.

Pam Slater cautioned that wetlands can only remove certain types of pollutants, and we can not expect them to fix everything.

Deb Smith recommended that the Regional Water Board's TMDL and 401 certification programs be added to Action 2.1, regarding coordinating with other public agencies.

Mary Nichols elaborated on this by stressing that two important issues for coordinating with other agencies are stormwater management and water quality.

Steve Weisberg pointed out to the Board that two important policy decisions are reflected in the Regional Strategy: 1) the document elevates the importance of watershed in the WRP's work; and 2) the Strategy assumes that water quality projects would be undertaken primarily to improve habitat quality.

Alexis Strauss commented that it would be useful to have a longer, more informal discussion about the WRP's role in regards to water quality, and suggested holding a joint meeting with the Board and Wetlands Managers Group to discuss this issue.

Pam Slater cautioned the Board from focusing too much on upstream issues to the detriment of coastal wetlands. She stressed the need to keep coastal wetlands as a high priority.

The Board adopted the Regional Strategy by consensus.

## 6. Public Comment

*Marcia Hanscom, Wetlands Action Network* – Ms. Hanscom echoed Supervisor Slater's statement about the importance of coastal wetlands. She urged the WRP agencies to take steps to encourage the emergence of willing sellers at privately-owned coastal wetlands. She acknowledged that some of the statements in the Regional Plan will help with this, but stressed the need for more leadership from the agencies.

Alexis Strauss suggested that this might be a role the County Task Forces could take on.

*Jim Peugh, Friends of Famosa Slough* – Mr. Peugh pointed out for the Board that in some instances natural wetlands may be protected or enhanced by the installation of a constructed wetland. Recognizing this, the WRP should not have a blanket policy against funding constructed wetlands projects.

Unidentified speaker – A comment was made that the WRP should focus more on preventing loss and degradation of existing resources. The speaker stressed the need to address policy issues related to this concern.

*Roy van de Hoek, Wetlands Action Network* – Mr. Van de Hoek praised the presentation given by Wayne Ferren on the linkages between wetland and upland habitats. He recommended that at a future meeting the WRP provide even more education on wetland/upland connections and transitions.

7. Questions or comments about the meeting minutes should be directed to Trish Chapman at the Coastal Conservancy, (510) 286-0749, fax (510) 286-0470, or e-mail: [tchapman@scc.ca.gov](mailto:tchapman@scc.ca.gov).